

# DSS Policy and Procedure Guide

Division 03: Child Welfare

Chapter 01: Director's Policies

Item 021: Injury or Illness of a Child/Youth While Awaiting Placement in DSS Custody

Suggested changes send to: [DSS PSOA](#) Mailbox

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References:

New

## Preamble

Child Welfare Policy and Procedure Guides (PPG) are meant to be used as tools to relay best practice and staff expectations. It is understood that specific case scenarios may not always align themselves with the stated practices and that at all times what is of paramount importance is the Safety and Well-being of the children we are charged to protect.

## Policy

The Department of Social Services (DSS) will ensure an appropriate response to reporting of any illness or injury of children and youth while awaiting placement in a DSS building or facility.

## Procedure

Children/youth are brought to a DSS building or facility at initial removal or due to placement disruptions to await placement. During these periods of time, children/youth will be supervised by DSS Social Workers (SW), Social Worker Aides (SWA), and Social Work Supervisors (SWS).

The assigned SW is responsible for gathering pertinent health information about the child to ensure that the child's health and well-being are maintained while in DSS care and custody. Upon being brought to a DSS building or facility, the SW will sign the minor in and provide any medical, mental health, behavioral, or any other relevant information about the child/youth to on-site staff. The SW will disclose to on-site staff of any known condition that may impact the child's health and well-being while being supervised by DSS staff. Examples of conditions that should be disclosed include, but are not limited to:

- Allergies (including food allergies)
- Asthma
- Seizure disorders
- Developmental delays/disabilities
- Visual or hearing impairments
- Self-harming behaviors
- Aggressive behaviors
- Sexual acting out behaviors

- Substance use issues

### **Medical Clearance**

A child/youth must be medically cleared if it is determined that the child has a medical condition that could pose a risk to their health and safety while under the supervision of DSS staff. In addition, if a child is injured while in DSS care and custody the child must be medically cleared by a physician. Examples of conditions that require medical clearance include, but are not limited to:

- Uncontrolled diabetes
- Children with specialized health care needs (as defined in PPG [03-05-037 Placement of Children with Specialized Health Care Needs](#))
- Complaint of pain or injury
- Ingestion of substances
- Fever
- Vomiting
- Any loss of consciousness
- Swelling
- Bleeding
- Broken bones
- Cuts/abrasions requiring medical care

The SW must consult with their SWS, on-call SWS, and/or Program Manager (PM) regarding the need to take a child to be medically cleared. The SW will transport the child to a local emergency room for assessment and clearance prior to bringing the child to a DSS building or facility.

### **Injury While in DSS Custody**

In the event that a child sustains an injury while in a DSS building or facility, the staff person supervising the minor will immediately assess the extent of the injury. The staff person will call 9-1-1 (9-9-1-1 from a County desk phone) for assistance if any of the following apply:

- Loss of consciousness
- Child is not breathing or having trouble breathing
- Severe bleeding
- Any head injury

The above scenarios are not inclusive of every situation that a staff person would contact 9-1-1 for assistance. The staff person will consult with the on-call SWS regarding any injury and the need for emergency medical services. However, what is of the utmost importance is that the staff person does not delay in contacting 9-1-1 if the child appears to be in distress.

### **Notification**

The staff person supervising a child who suffered an injury or illness while in DSS custody will immediately contact their SWS or on-call SWS. The staff will provide the following information:

- Date and time of the incident
- Child's name
- Description of the injury
- Description of the incident
- Who was present when the incident occurred
- What immediate steps the staff person took upon learning of the injury or illness
- Were paramedics called or was the child taken to be medically cleared
- What is the current prognosis of the child

The SWS will then contact their PM or on-call PM immediately and notify them of the injury or illness. The SWS will also complete the [Non-Employee Incident Report](#) (PSD-RM 301) and email the completed form to County Risk Management at [HRRiskmanagement@fresnocounty.gov](mailto:HRRiskmanagement@fresnocounty.gov) and [DSS Personnel](#).

The PM will immediately contact both Child Welfare Deputy Directors (DD) and notify them of the situation. The DD will then notify the DSS Director.

The staff person or the SWS will contact the child's parent or legal guardian to notify them of the illness or injury. If the parent requests to be present at the hospital while the child is being treated, the SWS will review the case and make the appropriate determination based on the circumstances of the case and current court orders regarding parental visitation.

The staff person supervising the child who suffered an injury will complete an Incident Report as outlined in PPG [03-11-001 Incident Reporting and Investigation](#).